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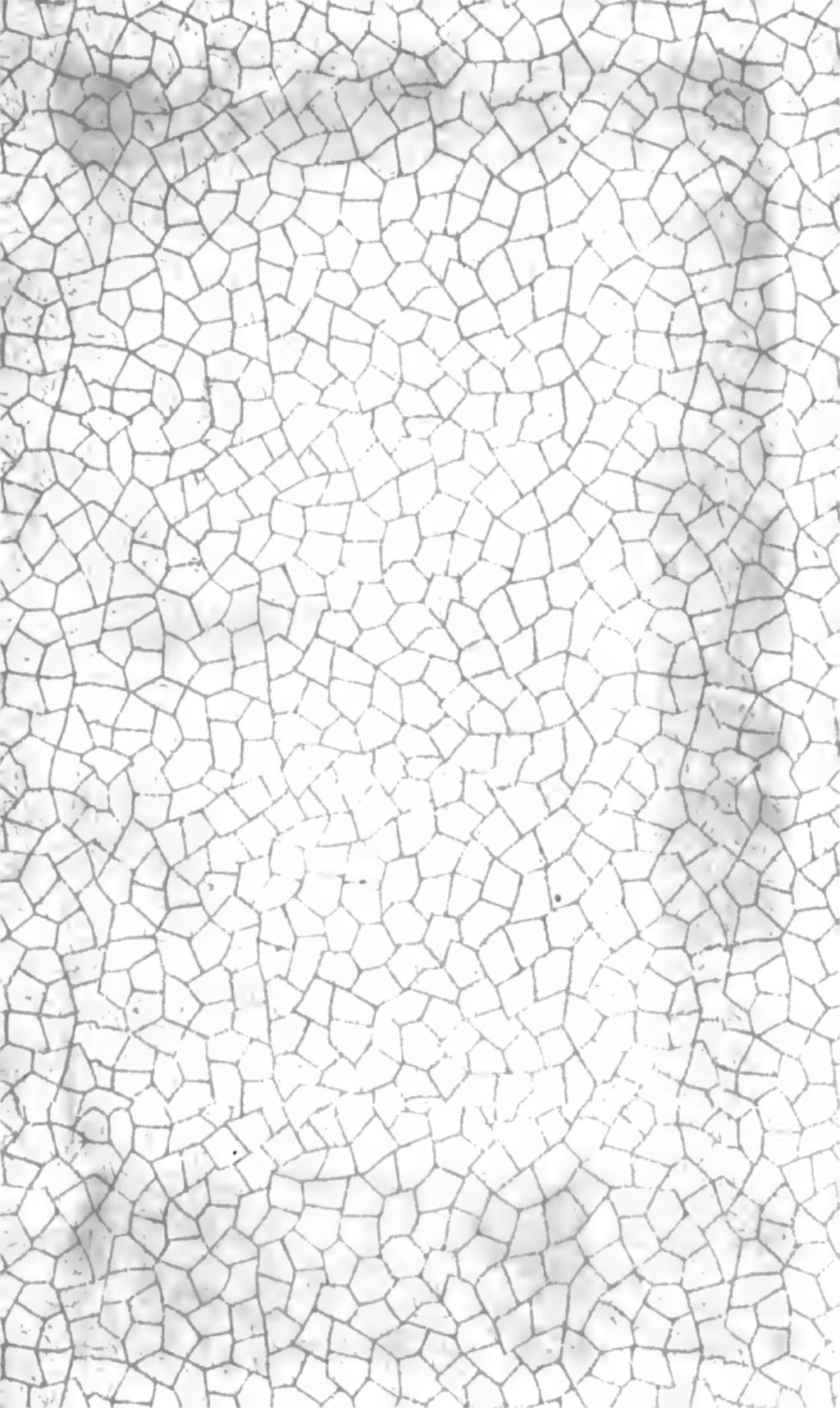
Hymns and Poems

REV. G. F. RAMSBOTTOM. B.A.





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HYMNS AND POEMS

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HYMNS AND POEMS

BY THE

REV. G. F. RAMSBOTTOM, B.A.

STAKEHILL

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18. 12

PREFACE

I FEEL that a word of apology is due from me in submitting the following hymns and poems to you. With one or two exceptions it will be ten years ago, at the least, since the latest of them was written ; and this fact, I think, is evidence that I am not now publishing them because I claim for them any special merit.

Our Bazaar must be my excuse for their publication. The whole proceeds of their sale will be given to the Endowment Fund ; so I venture to hope that this small volume may

serve as some memento of the Bazaar itself, and also as a source of income, however slight, to its funds.

I need only say one word in respect to the poems themselves. They were written when I lived in one of the most lovely dales in Derbyshire; and it will be seen that most of those which are not purely Scriptural in character are founded upon incidents occurring among a people to whom I had become devotedly attached, and for whom I shall always entertain the highest regard.

Sincerely yours,

GEORGE F. RAMSBOTTOM.

THORNHAM: *September* 1894.

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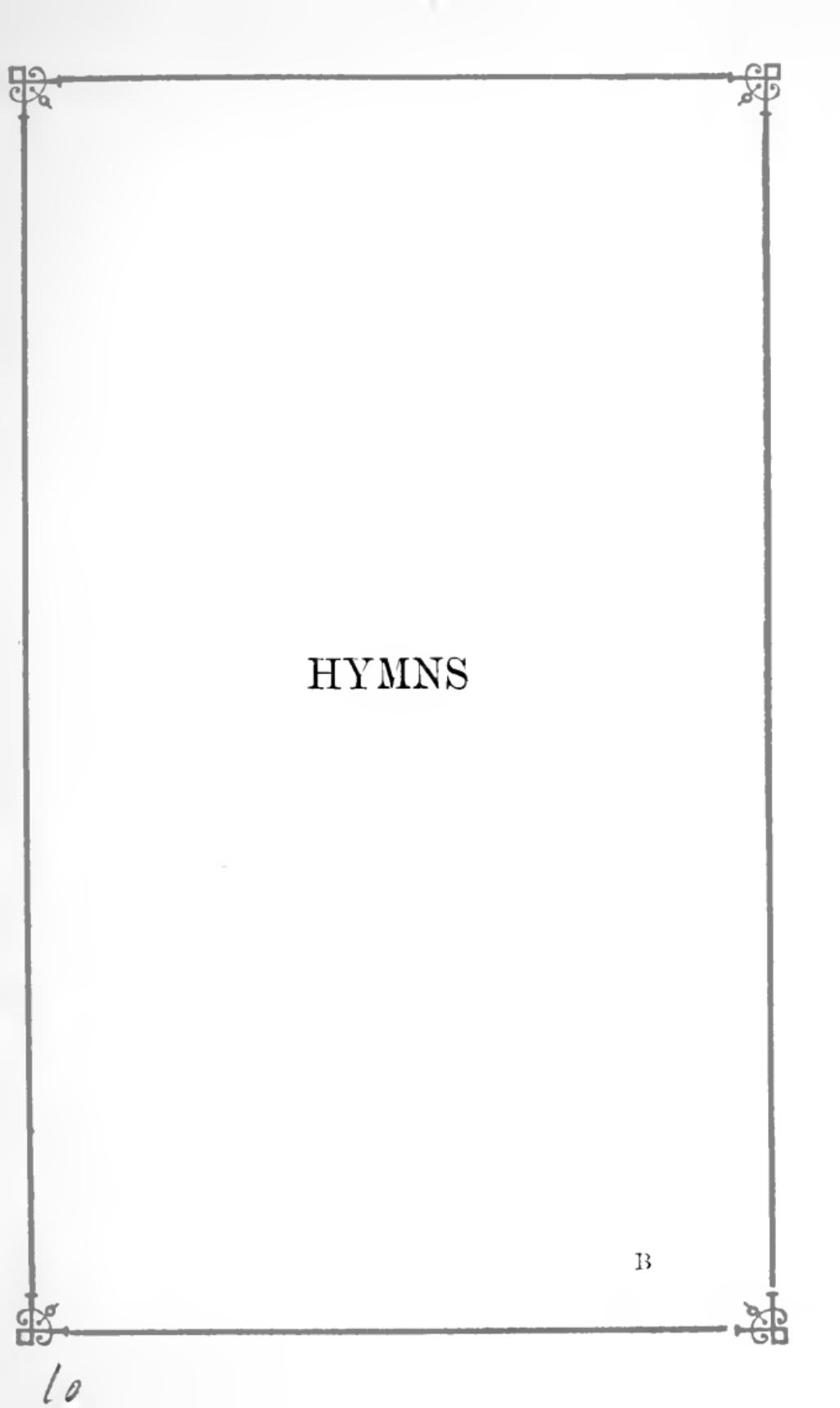
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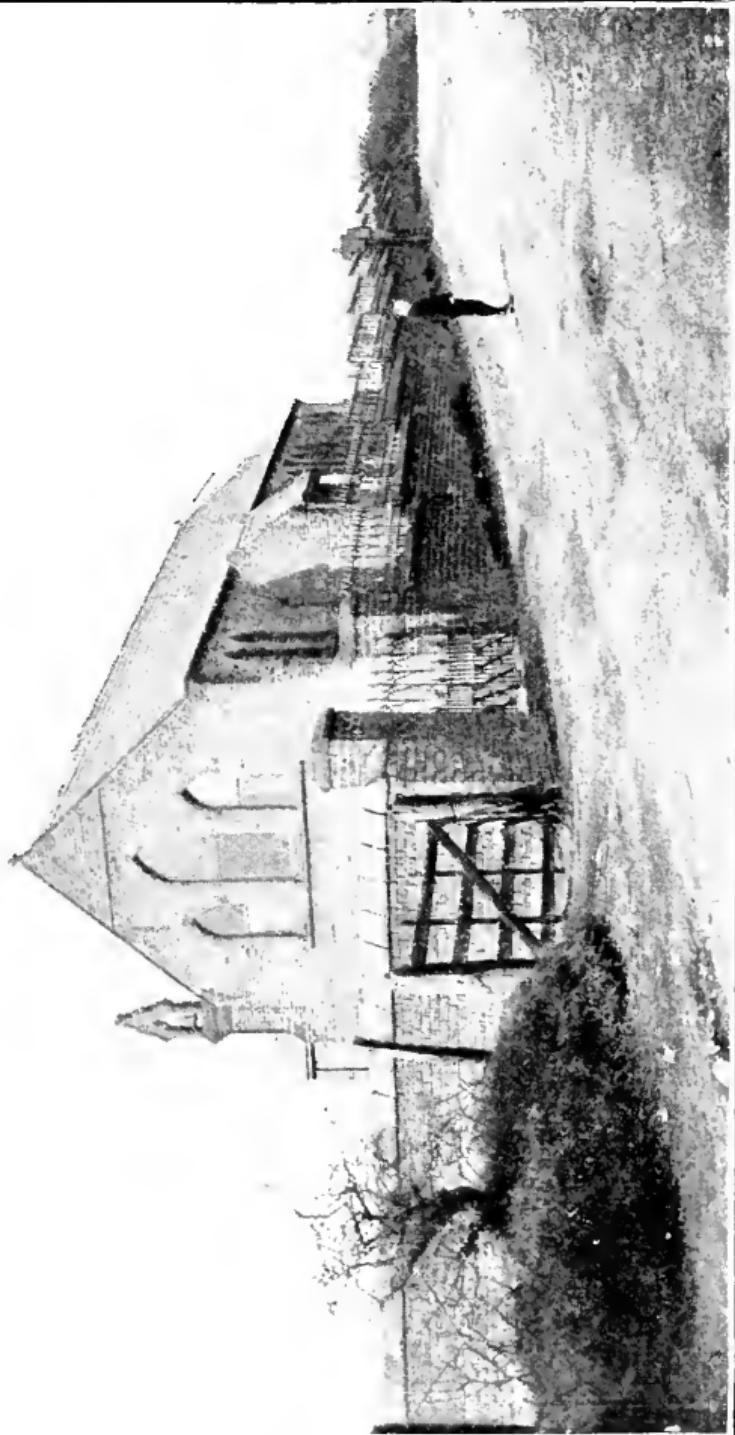
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HYMNS

B



ST. JAMES' SCHOOL.

A MORNING HYMN

(WRITTEN FOR CHILDREN)

THE night is past, the hours of darkness fled;
Once more I may my daily course pursue;
Thanks be to Thee, Who watched around my bed,
And didst with gentle sleep my strength renew.

Whatever truths Thou dost this day impart,
May they by grace my disposition mould,
And, sinking deep within my inmost heart,
Bring forth most glorious fruit; an hundredfold,

And though, O Lord, Thy form I may not see,
Throughout this day may I Thy presence feel ;
And may no grievous sin recorded be,
Which that great day more fully shall reveal.

Grant, Lord, as each successive morn appears,
In Thy sweet life I may my pattern see ;
May I increase in wisdom as in years,
And be less like to earth, more like to Thee.

When in the sleep of death my body lies,
May faithful angels keep their watch around ;
And on that Easter morn when all arise,
May I, O Lord, on Thy right hand be found.

*And He bearing His cross went forth into a place
called the place of a skull.—St. John, xix. 17*

W^HOSE form is this I see
Bending beneath its load ;
Treading the way to Calvary ?
Jesus, the Son of God.

And who this gathering throng,
Some weeping as they go,
While others, mocking, rush along,
Till Calvary's plains do show ?

Those are the faithful few,
Weeping their dying Lord ;
These, of the hateful stubborn Jew,
Revilers at His Word.

Oh ! wondrous depth of love,
Suffering intensest woe,
Man's soul to raise to God above,
And free from earth below.

Lord, may that love be strong
Round this weak soul of mine,
And may I serve Thee my life long,
And evermore be Thine.

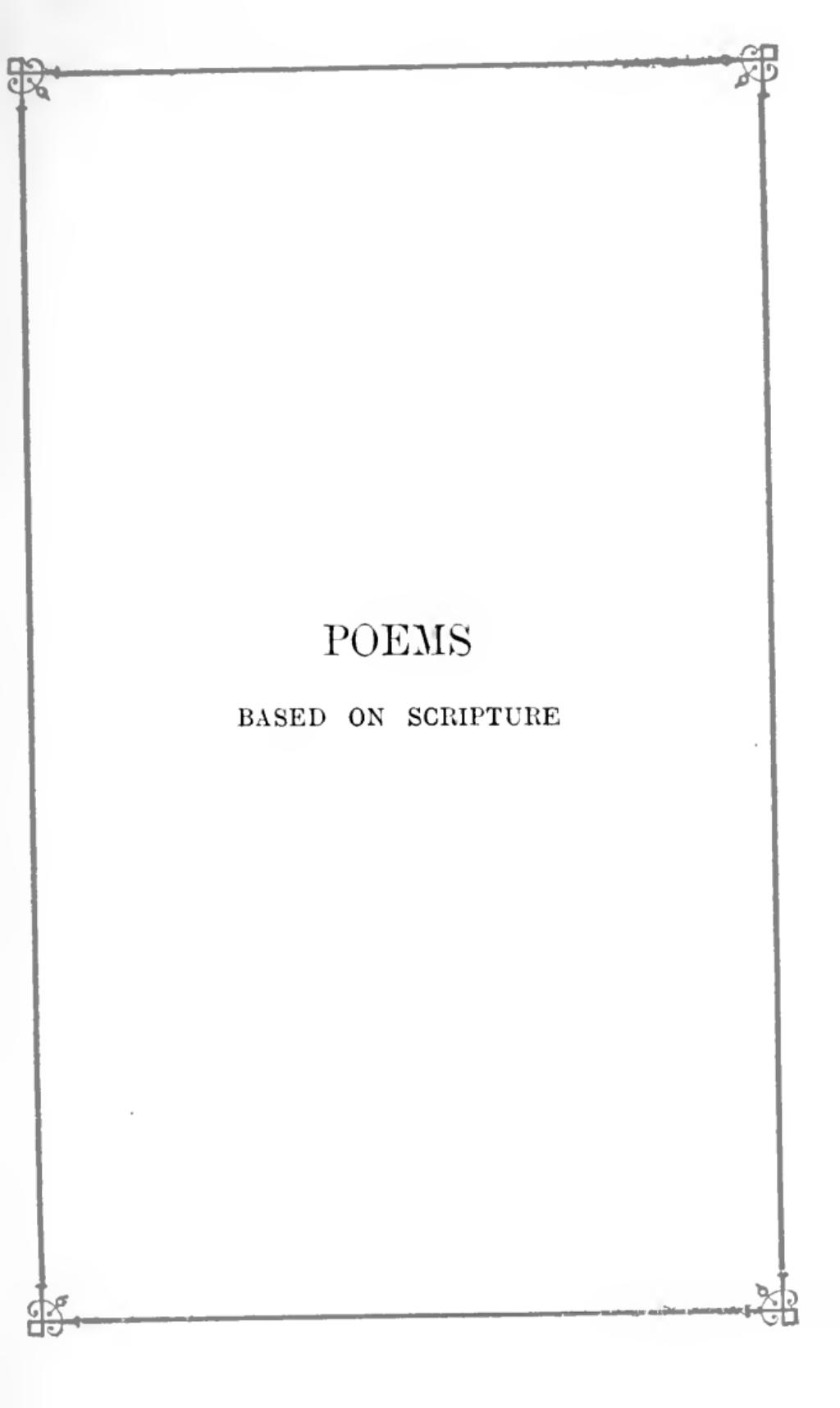
*But was in all points tempted like as we are, yet
without sin.—Hebrews, iv. 15*

WHEN tempted to distrust Thy care,
And fleshly wants lie heavily,
May we, to shun the tempter's snare,
Remember Thee.

Should vain ambition's subtle power
Tempt us to deeds that evil be,
May we, in that our trial hour,
Remember Thee.

When duty points not out the way,
And death is braved for vain glory,
May we, in that our evil day,
Remember Thee.

And when, O Lord, our strength is spent,
And flesh and spirit fainting be,
Grant that such aid to us be sent
As strengthened Thee.



POEMS
BASED ON SCRIPTURE

Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul

also.—St. Luke, ii. 35

BEHOLD her standing by the cross,

A loving mother mild ;

The sword has pierced thy stricken heart,

Blest Mary, undefiled.

That Child of whom the angels sang,

Whom wise men came to see,

Is hanging on the tree of shame

To set the sinner free.

Forsaken by His followers all,

Save the beloved John,

She needs must follow to the end,

She cannot leave her Son.

She sees the bleeding hands and feet,

She hears the bitter cry

Of Him, the Son of God, Who dies

As worst of mortals die.

She hears the Jews speak in contempt

Of Him Who sins forgave ;

And mocking cry, ' He saved others,

Himself He cannot save.'

Nor yet unheeded that fond soul

By the beloved One ;

Who cried, as He her anguish saw,

‘ Woman, behold thy Son.’

‘ The Scriptures are in Me fulfilled,

My Father’s will is done ;

Henceforth the heavens must Me receive—

Woman, behold thy Son.’

‘ To shield thee in the storms of life

When I from thee am gone,

To hold thee in thy failing years,

Woman, behold thy Son.’

The struggle o'er, the victory won,
Sorrowing, they depart ;
Truly the sword of keenest woe
Had piercèd through her heart.

MARY MAGDALENE

WHO is this that draweth nigh,
Nigh unto the tomb ?

Canst thou hear the bitter cry

As she stoopeth down ?

See ! she kneels beside the tomb

With a downcast head ;

Piteously doth she mourn

For the missing dead.

Can that be the gardener,

Standing by her side ?

‘ If thou knowest, tell me where,

Where He now is laid.’

What is that which now she hears ?

Down to earth she falls ;

Christ it is Who now appears,

He it is Who calls.

‘ Mary,’ said the well-known voice—

Her Master doth her greet.

‘ Rabboni,’ she answers mild,

Kneeling at His feet.

Oh, how the enraptured soul
Kindles at the scene :
Blest above the chosen ones,
Mary Magdalene.

How that noble, fervent love
Met with its reward :
Last to leave the sepulchre,
First to see the Lord.

THE PROMISED PEACE

(WRITTEN CHRISTMAS 1880)

THE powers of hell had well nigh done
their worst;

The ancient world had seen its darkest hour;
When suddenly from Heaven a light outburst;
It shone from east to west—God's quickening
power.

The sophistries of Greece, the pride of Rome,
Were doomed to perish by Divine decree;

And He Who should unseat them from their
throne
To outward view had sprung from Galilee.

Thus, from a place despised, even in a land
By all the world beside held in disdain,
He chose to spring, Who, with a mighty Hand,
O'erthrew the ancient faiths, burst Satan's
chain.

And who, that gazed upon that helpless babe,
As He at Bethlehem in the stable lay,
Could guess the wondrous part in life he played,
The loving Teacher of the latter day ?

How eagerly the shepherds crowd around,
And to the blessed maid their tale relate :
Still in their ears rings the joyous sound
Proclaiming peace to men from Heaven's gate.

But where the promised peace ? the scoffers say ;
The world as yet is full of war and pain,
And peace as distant seems as on that day
When first your shepherds heard the Heavenly
strain.

True, Lord, the nations still in warfare rage,
Even those that call upon Thy Holy Name ;
And nought but human blood can foes assuage,
Whose false religion is to them their shame.

Look not for peace while might doth rule mankind;

The nations still have yet to learn My law :

They to My Gospel's light as yet are blind,

Though honouring Me, indeed, in outward
show.

He who of old the courts of Heaven defiled,

Some power possesses o'er the nations still ;

What power the tempter had when in the wild

He yet may give to whomsoe'er he will.

Look where that soul in lonely anguish lies,

Parted from one the earth no more can see :

I know his sorrow, hear his bitter cries,

I soothe the aching heart—peace comes from Me.

See where that soul, by deadening doubt oppressed,
Pours out itself to Me in fervent prayer :
My grace I give to calm that troubled breast,
The wavering faith is strengthened—peace is
there.

See that poor sinner seeking newer life,
While his past sins before his mind arise :
I meet him at the outset of his strife,
To Calvary's cross I lift his weeping eyes.

Who looked to Me for help, and looked in vain ?
The wounds of fallen man by Me are healed ;
By faith My children see beyond life's pain
The promised glory that shall be revealed.

And universal peace I yet will send ;
My kingdom draweth nearer day by day ;
And let all those who strive to gain that end
Place their whole trust in Me, and watch and
pray.

Lord, give us grace. May we Thy word obey,
And may Thy precious blood for sin atone,
And may we yet behold that glorious day
When nations, now divided, shall be one.

'Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.'—St. Matthew, v. 8

DIDST thou e'er look into some youthful eyes

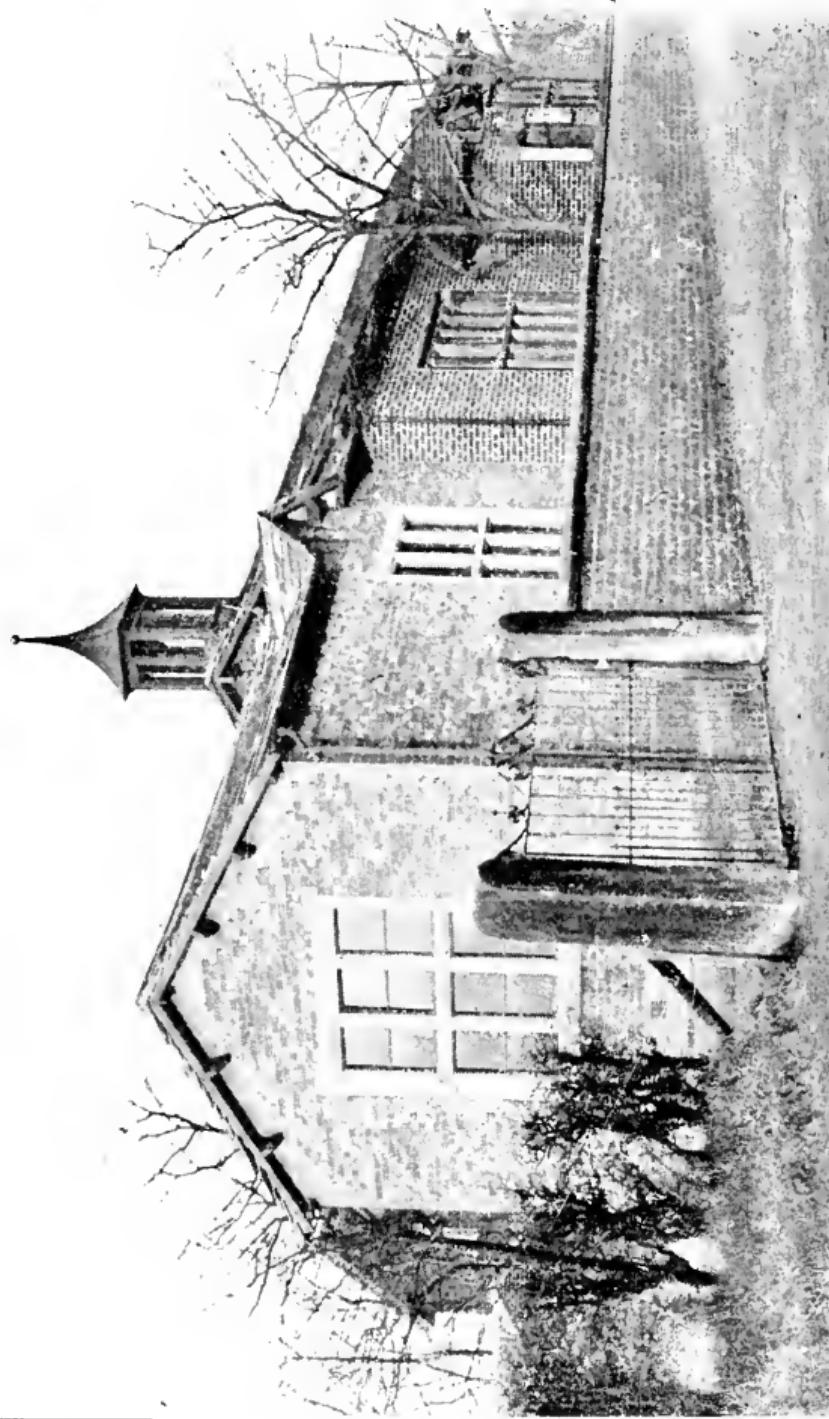
That glanced at thee from out a soul unsoiled,
And as thou gaz'st, did e'er the thought arise :

Such once wert thou, till tainted with the world?
As mists and cloud in dull December's days

Press on the earth and weigh the spirits down,
And mother earth her gracious bounty stays
And joyless sleeps, bereft of warmth and sun ;

So doth the human soul no growth display ;
When wedded to the earth, her brief abode,
Its cares oppress, its pleasures bar the way
That leads her to the presence of her God.
Could we but keep that purity of thought
Which once was ours in childhood's stainless
days,
While heart and intellect true knowledge sought,
True progress made in wisdom's pleasant ways ;
Then might we hope to pierce the secret veil
That hides the Maker from our mortal sense,
And in His book of Nature never fail
To see revealed Divine Omnipotence.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS



THORNHAM OLD SCHOOL.

THORNHAM OLD SCHOOL

THOU sacred pile, though modest be thy
guise,

With no pretensions to artistic skill ;
Yet is thy plainness beauty in the eyes

Of one who loves the place thou dost fulfil.

Far from the crowd's rude noise thou modest
stands,

O'ershadowed by the spreading beech and
thorn,

Under whose shade the children join their hands,
While joyously their songs are upward borne.

From nigh thy seat the lark his matin sings,
And heavenward soars—true type of Christian
hope ;
While that sweet peace the Christian faith e'er
brings
Is shadowed in the thrush's mellow note.

How sweet the sight, when on some summer's
morn
Through field and lane the children wend their
way :

The youth, who dreams not yet of hate or
scorn,

The child, who scarce can yet his letters say.

Now joining hand in hand they lightly pass,

With merry shout and faces full of glee ;

Now chase the butterfly along the grass,

As if this life might one long playtime be.

What tender memories about thee cling,

Of those once dear to thee in earlier life ;

Who taught within thy walls the truths that bring

Strength to the soul in this world's ceaseless
strife.

Some for their last long home have left this earth,
Their work by fiery trial counted dear ;
Though him, who in life's vigour gave thee birth,
God hath preserved to old age, ripe and sere.

Thy joys are homely joys thy people love ;
No cold or formal service hast thou known ;
No worshippers, whose pride themselves approve,
And, parted wide on earth, call Heaven their
home.

Though on thy walls no arts of man commend
The suppliant soul to where all beauty lies ;
Yet from thee, too, both prayer and praise ascend,
And comfort comes to man from Heavenly skies.

For Heaven's gate open stands to all who pray
With fervent soul, believing God is near ;
Whether in gorgeous temple they assay,
Or on the deep, or in the desert drear.

Well hast thou borne thy part, thy work fulfilled,
And in thy humble way thy duty done ;
May ne'er in thee the voice of prayer be stilled,
Or children cease to learn Heaven's race to run.

As years roll on, forgive the silent tear,
Shed by the one who loves thy simple state,
If chance, revisiting these scenes once dear,
The heavenward-pointing spire shall indicate

That for thee, too, the life has passed away,
The strength is spent, the noblest work is done ;
Though may he, too, as closes life's brief day,
In its sad setting see a rising Sun.

LINES TO A FAVOURITE DOG

(WRITTEN IN EARLY LIFE)

THOU little pet, thou little pet,
How playful are thy ways ;

Thou art ne'er possessed with gloomy hours
Or melancholy days.

Whene'er I call thee by thy name,
Thou look'st me in the face
And say'st, as plain as words could say,
' My service to your grace.'

And when I sit me down to dine,
Thou look'st to have thy part,
Or else thou mak'st the house to ring
With most impatient bark.

And must thou die, thou pretty one ?
Will death, too, come to thee ?
Thou thinkest not that life will end—
How happy must thou be.

If thou didst know the fate of man
‘ ‘Twould bring tears to thine eyes : ’
How the strong man, who to-day is,
In dust to-morrow lies.

But of these things thou thinkest not;
Sufficient 'tis for thee,
That thou dost know I love thee well—
And thou, too, lovest me.

IN MEMORIAM

(WRITTEN IN 1878. MY BROTHER DIED IN MAY 1876)

S ITTING and thinking—

Sad and alone—

With the mind dwelling

On days that are gone.

Happy and pleasant days,

Days that are past,

Before life's bitter winds

Had blown a chill blast.

Seeing beside me,
Like as of old,
One who could guide me,
Now lying cold.

One who was ever near
Ready to save,
Gone from me evermore,
Gone to the grave.

Vain seems this world to me ;
Ambition fled ;
He, for whose sake I strove,
Cold is, and dead.

Jesus of Nazareth,
Thou, too, hast wept,
When in the silent tomb
Lazarus slept.

Wept with the sufferers
At their sad cry,
Though Thou hadst come to change
Sorrow to joy.

Drive all my doubts away ;
Thy Spirit give ;
Tell me, though far removed,
Yet he doth live.

Tell me those blessed words,
Given to Mary :
He that believes in Me
Never shall die.

Grant me a faith that can
Never be shaken ;
Firm as the solid rock,
Looking to Heaven.

Seeing, though out of sight,
In the long home,
Him, of whose earthly life
Part was my own.

So shall my soul have rest,
Left her to stay,
Until Thy gentle voice
Call her away.

LINES TO FREDDIE

THOU know'st we love thee well,
Thou fair-haired boy ;
We love thy prattling tongue,
Thy bright blue eye.

When thou wast but a babe
Thy mother died,
And thy best earthly friend
Went from thy side.

Then thou wast brought to us,
Cared for and fed ;
Loved for thy winning ways,
Loved for the dead.

And as I gaze on thee—
Sit on my knee—
Who is there that can tell
What thou wilt be ?

Wilt thou thy temper guard,
So strong within ?
Or will it goad thee on,
Leading to sin ?

Will this world's temptations
Please to thine eye ?

Wilt thou be poisoned with
Earth's vanity ?

Or will thy soul aspire,
Eager for fame ;
Striving to make thyself
A lasting name ?

And when thou art gaining
Some longed-for goal,
Shalt thou be sneered at
By a meaner soul ?

May true ambition's aim
To thee be given,
Mayst thou be for saintly deeds
Mentioned in Heaven.

Mayst thou by grace maintain
A noble strife,
With thy name written down
In the Book of Life.

May He Who died for us,
The Saviour mild,
Throughout life's chequer'd path
Guard thee, my child.

And when thy day is past,
Life's trials o'er,
May thy soul reach at last
The Heavenly shore.

MARY

TIS the saddest tale that e'er I knew,
And yet a simple village tale ; the sufferer's
name
Scarce known beyond her village home.
She was a farmer's daughter, as a child
Thoughtful beyond her years ; and as she grew
To full estate, her thoughtfulness of mind
Showed itself forth in an expressive face ;
Her gaze had such control upon the mind of man,
That he who looked on her could speak
No foolish thing.



MARY.

Her father sickened ;
He loved his daughter dearly, and he would have
her
Always by his side. She nursed him night and
day,
And ne'er complained of weariness or pain ;
And when his body in the earth was laid,
She at dusk would come and dress the flowers
Upon her father's grave.

But Mary's face
Grew paler, and her form began to stoop.
' Can it be,' the neighbours whispered, ' that Mary
Mourns so much her father's loss that she herself
Is hastening to the tomb ? '

Said one :

‘ That may not be ; her father lived
The allotted span of life, and Nature
Doth not grieve so much for them as when
The young are taken ; that cannot be,
For Mary’s faith is strong.’

Full two years
Passed away, yet Mary grew no stronger,
But her mind was cheerful, and her troth
Was plighted to a young man of the village,
Noble and good. They loved each other dearly,
And their lives seemed linked together.

The busiest time of all the year came round,

And Mary went away to see her friends,
That, with strength renewed, she might return
And do, as was her wont, among the hay.
But ere a week had passed from her return
A fever laid her low. The body, spent before,
Could by no means resist the dread disease.
Her mother tended her, and as she gazed
Upon her daughter's face, so pale, so worn,
Forebodings of a bitter hour would come
Into her mind. She drew apart and wept,
And then, with strength renewed by silent prayer,
With cheerful look and voice of sympathy,
Returned and ministered again her daughter's
wants.

But Mary felt the end was near ;
She thought not of herself, her hopes or fears,
But saw the grief of those she left behind,
And to strengthen them at times she spoke :
‘ Mother, you must not grieve too much for
me,
I leave myself entirely in God’s hands ;
If He wills, He yet can raise me up,
If not, I am content, His will be done.
This life is short and full of care and trouble ;
I go some time before ; you, too, must follow.
But speak to Will, and tell him not to fret
Too greatly ; I loved him dearly, he will not
forget me.

He still will come to see you, and you'll speak of
me.

And ask him, too, to hold him fast by God,
And let his life be one of duty done for Him ;
And in Heaven we yet shall meet,
Where partings cannot enter.'

Thus Mary spoke,
And those about her wept ; and as the end
Drew nigh, she breathed the hymns she loved so
well,
Which spoke of Heaven, and the love of Him
Who died for all.

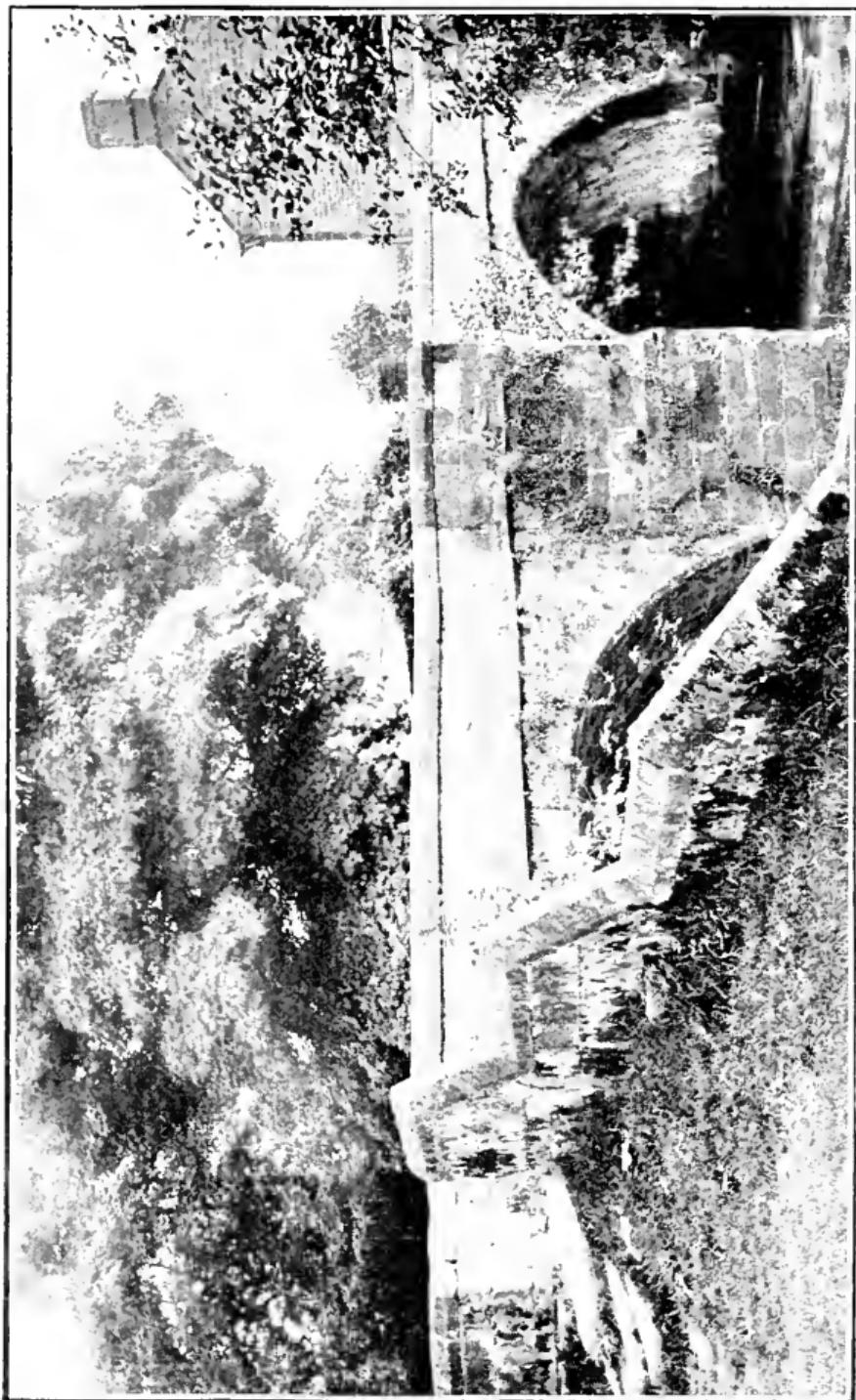
And her soul passed away,
And all the village wept. And he who loved her

As his life—bowed down with grief—his life's
hopes blasted,

In a few short weeks had shrunk—the shadow
Of his former self.

And she was laid beside her father,
And they who had been nearest to her in her life
Were led away, heart-broken, from the grave.

BRIDGE END, DIERVENT.



OLD MATTHEW

(WRITTEN MAY 1ST, 1880. THE 81ST ANNIVERSARY OF
HIS BIRTHDAY)

FULL fourscore winters have I seen,
With surly blast;

These eyes are dim that once were keen,
This form is bent that straight hath been ;
My strength is past.

Of friends I had in former time
Scarce one is left ;

Some passed have to a foreign clime,
Some were, even in their manhood's prime,
Of life bereft.

Ye that are young, on years to come
Your hopes are cast ;
Future in this world have I none,
For they whose race is almost run
Live in the past.

Things that to you seem long gone by,
To me are new ;
It seems but yet as yesterday
Since news came o'er of victory
At Waterloo.

But be not in your youthful years
On pleasures bent ;
'Twill bring an old age full of tears,
For all such folly then appears
As time misspent.

And think not that life's eventide
To me is pain ;
My hope is placed in Him Who died,
Out of Whose hands and pierced side
Our pardon came.

Though to this world's uncertain light
These eyes are dim,

They yet can pierce death's dismal night,
And, swift as angels in their flight,
They rest on Heaven.

And now I wait the Master's call
To take me home ;
At times I hear the anthems roll,
Which fill the Heavens from pole to pole—
Lord Jesus, come.

LINES TO JESSIE

(ON THE SUDDEN DEATH OF HER MOTHER. WRITTEN IN 1881)

SWEET little tender one,
Flaxen-curled ;
Left to fight, motherless,
A hard, rough world.

Death, with a ruthless hand,
Thy parent took,
Ere she could cast on thee
One loving look.

Was there no profligate
Wasting his life
Who could death satisfy,
Ending his strife ?

Were there no aged ones
Her life could save ;
With footsteps tottering
Over the grave ?

But must he needs have one
In life's full prime ;
Thrust in the silent tomb
Before her time ?

Truly God seems to work
In ways unkind ;
In this world many things
Puzzle the mind.

Reasons for many things
Seem to us dim ;
Known in entirety
Only to Him.

What is thy comfort now ?
Sorrow thou must ;
All that is best beloved
Slumb'ring in dust.

Trust that her spirit lives,
Hovers around ;
Moving, by thee unseen,
Over the ground.

Loving thee evermore,
Watching thee now ;
Bent o'er thee when asleep,
Smoothing thy brow.

Sharing in all thy joys
Long as life lasts ;
Waiting to welcome thee,
Death being past.

Sweet little tender one,
Flaxen-curled ;
Left to fight, motherless,
A hard, rough world.

OUR MARRIAGE WISHES

NOW Hymen's bands are closely joined,
And ye are one for aye;

This is the wish of every heart :

Many happy returns of the day.

May health and strength long be your lot,

And may you both obey

The rule of 'Not too much,' which brings

Many happy returns of the day.

May both your lives in peace be spent,
And anger ne'er have sway ;
For ' Bear and forbear ' is sure to bring
Many happy returns of the day.

As years advance will come dull Care,
That saddens hearts once gay ;
But ne'er may he from you prevent
One happy return of the day.

And when old age comes creeping on,
May children be your stay ;
And may they ever strive to make
A happy return of the day.

And when your life's brief day is past,
And earth's joys flee away,
May your life be in realms above
One happy return of the day.

AN ELOPEMENT CASE

(A BALLAD)

O H ! in this world of woe and care,

When will our follies cease ?

For all our leading papers show

Elopements do increase.

But this, the most romantic case

That ever I did know :

Two belles, for beauty unexcelled,

Eloped—without their beaux.

There is a place, remote from town,
By tourists seldom seen,
Though, for delightful scenery,
In Derbyshire 'tis queen.

There, winter generally begins
Some bleak October day ;
And the villagers express surprise
Should there be warmth in May.

'Twas in a neat and snug farmhouse,
Upon a steep hill-side,
Two mothers were in concert sat,
Whose daughters were their pride.

And as they in their daughters' praise
Together did unite,
These maidens, in a room above,
Were planning for a flight.

They ope the window high enough
To let the body pass ;
Then, noiselessly, but quite unhurt,
They drop upon the grass.

Ne'er sped the hare across the plain,
Or hounds pursue the roe,
As swiftly as these maidens fair
Across the fields did go.

They stopped not once to look behind,
For full three miles they flee ;
And, breathless both, but still untired,
They get to Birchen-lea.

Without the ceremonious knock
They ope the farmhouse door,
And skip, like girls let loose from school,
Across the kitchen floor.

The servant-girl was quite amazed,
For, since she there had been,
A stranger in that house to come
She never yet had seen.

Now strains of music fill the house ;

The servants whisper low :

When, suddenly, right up the stairs

Both apparitions go.

The ¹ master of the house had just

Retired for the night ;

A knock he hears. ‘ My uncle, sure—

Come in ! ’ he cries. ‘ All right.’

Imagine his surprise and fear ;

His eyes are open wide ;

And, lo ! he sees a lady fair

Standing at his bedside.

¹ The ‘ master of the house ’ and the ‘ lady fair ’ were brother and sister.

Her form is straight, her stature just ;
Her teeth are white as pearls ;
And on her brow, like threads of gold,
Do sit the playful curls.

He rubs his hand across his eyes,
To see if wake or no ;
But ere he looked a second time
Adown the stairs they go.

They rush out of the house apace,
Along the glen they flew ;
And reached home by the comet's light
As fresh as morning dew.

THE ADOPTED CHILD

(The following poem was found in the scrap-book of the late Thomas Mellodow, Esq., of Oldham. I have not been able to ascertain the name of the author)

‘**W**HY would’st thou leave me, oh gentle
child ?

Thy home on the mountains is bleak and wild,
A straw-roofed cabin with lowly wall ;
Mine is a fair and pillared hall,
Where many an image of marble gleams
And the sunshine of pictures for ever streams.’

‘ Oh, green is the turf where my brothers play
Through the long bright hours of the summer day ;
They find the red-cup moss where they climb,
And they chase the bee over the scented thyme ;
And the rocks where the heath-flower blooms
they know.

Lady, dear lady, oh, let me go ! ’

‘ Content thee, boy, in my bower to dwell ;
Here are sweet sounds which thou lovest well :
Flutes on the river in the stilly moon,
Harps which the wandering breezes tune,
And the soft wood note of many a bird
Whose voice was ne’er in thy mountains heard.’

‘ My mother sings at the twilight fall
A song of the hills, far more sweet than all.
She sings it under our own green tree
To the babe half slumbering on her knee:
I dreamt last night of that music low.
Lady, dear lady, oh, let me go ! ’

‘ Thy mother is gone from her cares to rest;
She hath taken the babe on her quiet breast.
Thou would’st meet her footsteps, boy, no more,
Nor hear her song at the cabin door.
Come thou with me to the vineyards nigh,
And we’ll pluck the grapes of the richest dye.’

‘ Is my mother gone from her home away ?
But I know that my brothers are there at play.
I know they are gathering the fox-glove’s bell
And the long fern leaves in the sparkling well ;
Or they launch their boats where the sweet
streams flow.
Lady, dear lady, oh, let me go ! ’

‘ Fair child, thy brothers are wanderers now ;
They sport no more on the mountain’s brow.
They have left the fern by the spring’s green side
And the stream where the fairy barks were tried.
Be thou at peace in thy brighter lot,
For thy cabin home is a lonely spot ! ’

‘Are they gone, all gone, from the sunny hill?
But the bird and the blue-fly rove o’er it still,
And the red deer bound in their gladness free,
And the heath is bent by the singing bee,
And the waters leap, and the fresh winds blow.
Lady, sweet lady, oh, let me go !’

THE TWO ORPHANS

MY chaise the village inn did gain
Just as the setting sun's last ray
Tipt, with resplendent gild, the vane
Of the old church across the way.

Across the road I silent sped,
The time till supper to beguile
In moralising o'er the dead
That moulder'd round the ancient pile.

There many an humble gravestone showed
Where want, and pain, and toil did rest ;
And many a flattering stone I viewed,
Of those who once of wealth possessed.

A faded beech its shadow brown
Threw o'er a grave where sorrow slept :
On which, though scarce with grass o'ergrown,
Two ragged children sat and wept.

A piece of bread between them lay,
Which neither seemed inclined to take ;
And yet they seemed so much a prey
To want, it made my heart to ache.

‘ My little children, let me know
Why you in such distress appear ;
And why you, wasteful, from you throw
The bread that many a heart would cheer.’

The little boy in accents sweet
Replied, and tears each other chased :
‘ Lady, we have not food to eat,
And, if we had, we would not waste.

‘ But sister Mary’s naughty grown,
And will not heed whate’er I say ;
Though sure I am the bread’s her own,
For she has tasted none to-day.’

‘Indeed,’ the wan, starved Mary said,
‘Till Henry eats, I’ll eat no more;
For yesterday I had some bread—
He’s had none since the day before.’

My heart did swell, my bosom heaved,
I felt as though deprived of speech;
And silent sat upon the grave
And took the clay-cold hand of each.

With looks that told a tale of woe,
With looks that showed a grateful heart.
The shivering boy then nearer drew
And did their tale of woe impart:

‘ Before my father went away,
Enticed by bad men o'er the sea ;
Sister and I did nought but play ;
We lived beside yon green ash tree.

‘ And then poor mother did so cry,
And looked so changed, I cannot tell ;
And told us that she soon must die,
And bid us love each other well.

‘ She said that, when the war was o'er,
Perhaps we might our father see ;
But, if we never saw him more,
That God our father then would be.

‘ She kissed us both, and soon she died ;
And we no more a mother have.

For many a day we sat and cried
Together, on poor mother’s grave.

‘ But when my father came not here,
We thought, if we could find the sea,
We should be sure to meet him there,
And, once again, might happy be.

‘ We, hand in hand, went many a mile,
And asked our way of all we met ;
While some did sigh, and some did smile,
And we of some did victuals get.

‘ But when we reached the sea, and found
‘ Twas one great water round us spread ;
We thought that father must be drowned,
And cried, and wished we both were dead.

‘ So we returned to mother’s grave
And only long with her to be ;
For Godie, when this bread she gave,
Said father died beyond the sea.

‘ Then, since we have no parents here,
We’ll go and seek for God around ;
Pray, Lady, can you tell us where
That God, our father, may be found ?

‘ He lives in Heaven, our mother said ;
And Godie says our mother’s there ;
So, if she thinks we want His aid,
I think, perhaps, she’ll send Him here.’

I clasped the prattlers to my breast,
And cried : ‘ Come both and live with me :
I’ll clothe and feed you ; give you rest ;
And will a second mother be.

‘ And God will be your father still ;
‘ Twas He, in mercy, sent me here
To teach you to obey His will,
Your steps to guide, your hearts to cheer.’

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